

**The Little Book of 42s**

## David Haddock (Ex-ish President of ZZ9)

### 42 Spotting – The Fundamentals

Forty-two, so Douglas Adams claimed is the funniest of the two digit numbers, and he picked a number for the answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything as a joke. There is no significance to it. It is fun to spot instances of it occurring, however, I am a 42 fundamentalist. You cannot just have a four and a two next to each other in a number. It should be a decimal instance of the number, and is best when it comes of the blue. If you are counting something that increments in units, do not express amazement when you get 84% of the way to fifty. My favourite is that the reign of the Antichrist according to Revelation 13:5 will be “forty and two months.”

Forty-two. Find, share and enjoy.

Strange John failed to anagram ‘tabula rasa’ with ‘Slartibartfast’. If only he’d known that a transcript of an interview given by Slartibartfast after his retirement to the pundit circuit had travelled back through a wormhole and arrived on the features desks of various British newspapers.

In it Slartibartfast explained that on Magrathea he had constructed 42 Earths, each of which had developed a fault and required atomic destruction. All he’d found disturbing, though, was the commuting – by air car – through the gateway into the hyperspace constructor bay.

The Earth papers treated the story characteristically. Improbably, their headlines all contained the same 23 letters.

The *Daily Mail*, of course, had:

**Wasteful Traitor’s Atom Bay**

*The Sun* went with:

**Slartibartfast: My Auto Woe**

But *The Times* summed it up rather neatly as:

**Tabula Rasa Forty-Two Times**

## Jan van't Ent

### Living Around 42

Almost never did I live at the answer, but somehow I could make a case for always striving to approach that noble goal. Life started at number 85 (almost exactly doubling it) in a wooden house amidst a few acres of trees, only to leave it just ahead of some bulldozers preparing the way for, wait for it, no, not quite, a hospital. Then moved to number 4 next to 2 for a couple of years before taking the train to university ground and a number 33 (should I explain this being close to 42[oct] or half of 42[hex]?) and after learning some wisdom moved up to 37 (halving the distance). Sadly I never closed the final handful to arrive at the elusive haven of large friendly numbers, having passed by 42 happily.

## M42

Space is big. Really big. You just won't believe how vastly, hugely, mindbogglingly big it is, nor what amazingly wondrous and fantastic things it contains. One of the most amazing is the Orion Nebula. From a certain small blue-green planet, primitive ape-descendant life-forms have been known to mistake it for a sword, hanging from the belt of a mighty hunter, but the reality is much more remarkable.

That faint, fuzzy patch of sky is in fact a stellar nursery some 26 light-years across, giving birth to over 700 stars, each formed from vast clouds of hydrogen collapsing under their own gravity until they ignite, lighting up the gas and dust around them. Fierce stellar winds from the young stars send unimaginably large shock-waves through the cloud, blowing away the very gas which gave them life.

Give it 100,000 years or so and it will all be gone, so if you want to see it, better get out there quick. Just look for the hunter, and the sword on his belt.

## Alan Sullivan

Thought of a number...

Once upon a Dangercon – the one-day *Danger Mouse* convention – there was a quiz.

Dangercons were born when a member of ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha – The Official Hitchhiker’s Guide to The Galaxy Appreciation Society – suggested holding a *Danger Man* convention and someone misheard. The rest became history, or legend, depending on who you believe. They grew from a handful of ZZ9ers in someone’s flat, to a semi-regular event at Ruskin House, in the Croydon Fannish Epicentre, with many and varied attendees.

At the quiz, one question was: “Which Number is Most Significant: 69, 23 or 42?”

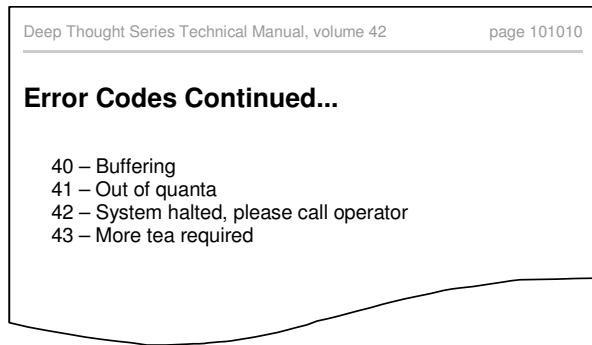
Choices were made, votes were cast and the results duly announced.

The one with the most votes – and therefore Most Significant Number – was 23.

There was a massed cry of: “Hail Eris! All Hail Discordia!” from the hard-core ZZ9ers and those of a certain age and persuasion – and bemused looks from everyone else, especially the newer ZZ9 members, who had not realised there were so many Shea and Anton-Wilson fans in ZZ9.

Many conclusions can be drawn from this, but that’s the way ZZ9 slouches...

I have of late been involved in some research into the answer as computed by the machine Deep Thought. My researches unearthed a little something in the technical manuals on page 101010.



I make no direct accusations but do feel that when computers are smart enough to bluff or post rationalise past their own mistakes then we could be in serious trouble.

## Paul Bowers

As a life form still inhabiting the planet commonly known as Earth I have accepted without question, that the answer to “Life, The Universe and Everything” is 42. I feel drawn to the number and see 42 all over the place, ever conscious of its magnetic attraction. I have studied birth charts and used mathematical equations to find a definitive reason for 42 to have such an effect on me, but with no result so far in this life. However in my subconscious mind I know that the number 42 is the very force of life for me. It will come; it will manifest itself in much the same way as following Portsmouth Football Club for 50 years believing them to be the greatest team ever, but with very little evidence until out of the blue they actually play in two FA cup finals in two years, win one then disappear into oblivion. If one can believe in something as nebulous as PFC then 42 is easy. As Neil Diamond once said, “I’m a Believer.”







## Dave Hicks

When I was 42 I became a father. If that ain't suddenly discovering meaning I'm not sure what is. My daughter is now eight and looked at me funny when I tried to introduce the concept of the Ultimate Question, the way that she does when I try and teach her to spell 'antidisestablishmentarianism'. We were watching *Horizon*, albeit a #!\$%&\*@ clip show. How the mighty have fallen. Meanwhile I try to pull together (with the fabulous and beautiful Yvonne Rowse) a programme for *Novacon 42*. Keen and eager people think the way to do this sort of thing is to have it all sorted six months in advance, but only if they've never had Harry Harrison turn up completely unannounced on the Friday night. The first time I did this I couldn't eat each day until the programme had finished. At convention hotels I expect towels to be provided but I know what I'd put on the front page of a conrunner's manual.

I've been to exactly one Novacon so far, and it was number 40, too. A fine number, even if it's not the answer to anything. I'd been dreaming of Novacon since I was 42 and fellow Seattleite Victor Gonzalez came back from one, telling me it was the best convention in England, far better than perfidious Albicon. Of course, in the event of my dream come true, my roommate Steve Green tried to get me up on stage for his chat show, and I'm afraid I actually did panic. My life passed before my eyes, as did the universe, followed shortly by everything. But this is all meaningless, isn't it? Sorry! My point is, I never knew Steve was such a menacing figure, but I certainly learned better that day. By no means allow this man to chair a Novacon, that's my advice. What's that you say? Well, in that case bring a towel, because there's sure to be a mess.

## Mike "42 stitches? That's not too many" Meara

What *That Number* Means To Me

Shouldn't take me long to come up with something. Not seven and a half million years, anyway, ha ha.

...erm... Ah, I know! The number of cons I've attended is... lessee... about twenty Novacons, say a dozen Eastercons, plus Worldcons, Silicons, Faancons, Corflu... Okay, that is too many.

Never mind. What about the number of fanzines I've published? Thirteen issues of aMfO, six of KfN, seven of LURK, maybe ten assorted one-shots and oddments... Not enough.

Not to worry. Now then – have I ever lived in a flat or house with that number? No. Okay, don't panic. So, if A=1, B=2 and so on, my name adds up to... 13 plus 9 plus 11 plus... where's that bloody calculator? Nope, doesn't work.

My waist size in inches is... 41. Damn! Must drink more bbeer.

Bbeer... there's an idea. The number of alcohol units I consume in an average week – not Novacon week, obviously – is... oh dear. Must drink less bbeer.

Inside leg measurement? No, that's just silly. Head size in cm? Length of – no, we won't go there.

Got it! 42 years ago this very week, Pat sold her golf clubs so we could afford to go to our first con, Eastercon in Worcester. (Her handicap was 42 as well, what a coincidence.) This is absolutely partly true. Ouch!

When Douglas Adams created the 42 joke I'm not sure he thought for one second that it would become such a huge symbol of life's absurdity shared by millions of kindred spirits. The truth is that in a world without a godly figure, we need something to hang on to, an incarnation of the absurdity that surrounds us, each second of our seemingly pointless existence. 42 is a reminder of life's existential challenge. 42 has been my motto since I was fourteen years old, and is as much a reminder of the world's absurdity as of the fact that we must not take life (and ourselves) too seriously. This is the true message of the nonexistent god to humanity. Next year I will be 42 years old, and I haven't yet decided how I will reach the summit of absurdity that could make me a worthy Douglas Adams Fan. But for sure it will involve a towel.

## Noel Collyer

Novacons have changed over the years (with the greying of Fandom obviously) and it's a shock to remember that I've been doing them since 1987-ish when I managed to get in 12 cons in that year and my excuse is that my liver's still suffering. Oh the lift parties when we'd noticed that there wasn't any musac in it so we'd stay in it & every time someone came in (mundane or fan) we'd hum along to the tune of *Girl from Ipanema* until they would go away again saying 'Oh it's only the Towlies.' Then we'd find out that the lift had broken down in depression & had hidden away in the basement but the engineer could only be there on Monday. At the disco that night *Ghostbusters* came on with *Liftbusters* substituted. Soon after that the badges appeared with 'ZZ9 Didn't Do it' which saved a lot of continuous explanation as we'd just have to point to the badge when something was blamed at us – just don't ask about 25 people in a double room, right?

Reading page 42 of a book sometimes leaves one “with a profound and vivid insight into... into... er...”:

“At any rate, it is for me entirely beyond doubt that the aim of all art not intending merely to be ‘consumed’ like a commodity is to explain to itself and to the environment the meaning of life and of the human existence – to make it clear to humans what is the reason and aim of their being on this planet. Or perhaps not to explain it to them, but just to confront them with that question. [Andrej Tarkowskij: *Die versiegelte Zeit*, Ullstein (1984), 2nd edition (2002), p. 42]

... this particular soul living in each of us, let us try to identify its law and then live according to this law! That is the purpose of life for every single one of us. Yet what the great and overall purpose of life in general is, we will never find out, and ultimately it is not necessary that we do find out.

[Egon Friedell: *Vom Schaltwerk der Gedanken*, Diogenes (2009), p. 42]

## Claire Brialey

### The Novacon 42 Special

There's a small group of SF fans for whom Novacon performs a very special service.

No, not that.

For *this* special service you need two qualifications, only one of which might require a time machine: to be attending Novacon, and to have been born at the right time.

If you meet those criteria, every year Novacon will do for you at least some of what it does for me. Because Novacon gives me some information, in a form I can easily attach to myself and thus probably not lose, which can be very useful during an SF convention.

My badge at each Novacon tells me who I am, roughly where I am, how old I am, and where I'm meant to be. One day, I hope and believe, the ingenious con committee will find a way to combine it with the key to my hotel room.

This year Novacon is 42. And so am I. Which means I'm looking forward to the other special service this time too.



To wallow in the obvious, we're talking about a number made famous by a bestselling genre author. Rule 42, "All persons more than a mile high to leave the court", inspired the 1980 fanzine *Rule 42* from that very very tall UK fan Chris Hughes. But Rule 42 is also "No one shall speak to the Man at the Helm" (borrowed in vain for the 1993 Eastercon newsletter where I was at the helm). It depends whether your source is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or *The Hunting of the Snark*. One hapless seafarer's lost luggage in the latter epic comprises "forty-two boxes, all carefully packed". In short, Lewis Carroll was strangely fond of the number 42, having perhaps calculated that it was an interestingly ordinary, even boring pair of digits that worked well in comedy. As we wrote in *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* theme entries when memory failed and not a single additional instance came to mind: further examples abound.

113 years after *Alice*, some chap called Adams adopted the number for his best-loved gag. The rest is history: Arcturan Megahistory.

## Judith Proctor

Six times seven is 42. Thus making 42 exactly equivalent to seven Cotswold morris teams. By a curious coincidence, I just spent a weekend learning Cotswold morris, with an average of seven teams on the floor.

The significance of this to Hitchhiker fans is obvious. For those unused to the mathematical definition of 'obvious' (*i.e.* needs at least ten minutes to prove), I shall expand.

Morris is a fractal dance form. It can always be broken into more sub-categories – there are at least three English morris traditions: Cotswold, North West and Border.

Cotswold breaks down into a number of local traditions, 'Fieldtown', 'Adderbury', *etc.*

Each tradition has a selection of dances, and many of these dances can be further divided into stick and hankie versions.

Consider the different types of hankies. Large linen ones can be held by the corners like a tiny parachute. Pocket hankies can be used, but aren't as good.

I could now go onto the different ways of holding the hankies between the fingers, but I'm sure you've already realized that morris is infinitely improbable.

The number 42

I've always found writing assignments to be difficult. This one did nothing to spark my creative processes, until I realised what it was that '42' REALLY meant to me.

Friendship.

Through the work of Douglas Adams, and other science fiction authors, I've met some wonderful people. Like-minded folks, who understand my weird references and my sense of humour. People who are far better at quoting obscure passages, identifying characters, and finishing my thought processes than I am. These are the people with whom I like to spend time, because there's always a sense of openness and welcome, a celebration when those from far away have returned to the fold, and a belief that all viewpoints should be debated – the more unusual and out-there, the better.

In reading science fiction, and in talking to the people who enjoy it, I've become more open to new ideas, and more likely to challenge current thinking.

With people like these, I start to believe that the world can change, and become a better place, that the human race can reach for and live amongst the stars. Life, the Universe, and Everything – it's really about those you're lucky enough to share the journey with. Choose wisely!

## Jacqui Barter

This image was originally created for a competition in *Mostly Harmless*, it's made with:

42 tea bags  
(Tetley, unused as yet)

42 milk bottle tops  
(38 foil and 4 plastic) salvaged mostly from my recycling box, but I had to wait for the milkman to come and order an extra pint to get the last four (see the level of dedication!)

42 packets of sugar  
(borrowed from the cafe)



When I think of 42, like most of you I think of Douglas Adams. Sadly I never got to meet the great man, but I certainly owe him a great deal.

It seems every few years Douglas comes into my life via various projects. It began in 2007 when my close friend (and Hitchhiker's champion) Kevin Davies asked me to provide a CGI Polyphase Avatron for a documentary on Douglas' Doctor Who story, *The Pirate Planet*. Shortly afterwards I provided some graphics for a behind the scenes short on the BBC Radio 4 version of *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, directed by Dirk Maggs.

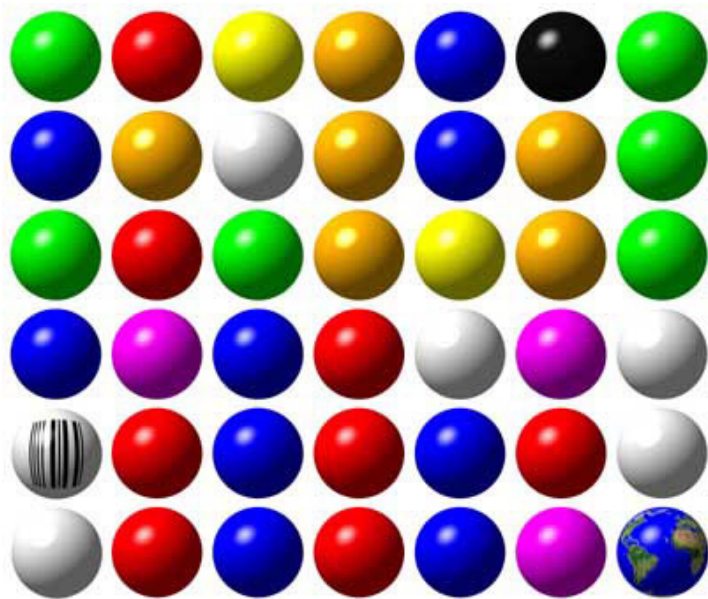


Things went quiet on the Douglas front until last year, when I designed a logo for his Virtual 60th held last spring at the Hammersmith Apollo. There I met Douglas' lovely family and was commissioned by Dirk and team to provide some visual elements for the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Radio Show Live!* tour. It's been a real honour and privilege to be a small part of these projects, so Douglas, I'd just like to say, thank you.

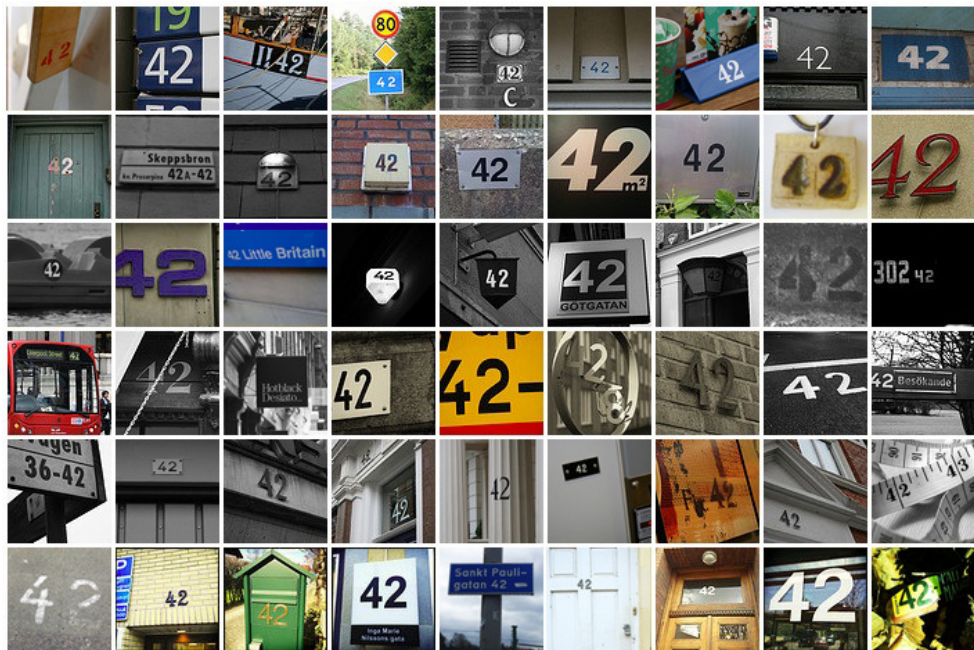
## Kevin Jon Davies

They'd prepared a surface of breeze blocks in vacuum-formed plastic, representing the wall of a bunker, where some desperate, unnamed survivor of a nuclear holocaust had repeatedly scrawled '42'. I was offered a piece of charcoal and told, "Just graffiti forty-twos on the wall in as many different ways as you can." Unnerved by the whole TV studio watching, I bottled it. Douglas Adams stepped forward and volunteered: "I'll do it!" And so he did. The clever clogs even wrote it in binary.

Thirteen years later he did it again. The big silver book, *The Illustrated Hitchhiker's Guide* was an epic in early digital image manipulation, pre-Photoshop, when it were still all fields around here. I'd designed everything else, but was stumped for a page full of Forty-Twos. "I'm all Hitchhikered out," I pleaded. "I know how that feels," admitted Douglas. So he designed a puzzle on one of his Macs. A pattern of coloured snooker balls. What did it all mean? Apparently it was coded with umpteen different Forty-Twos. I'm not sure Douglas ever did reveal the *complete* answer.



# Anna-Maria Oléhn





42 is the number of my family's static caravan, at a caravan park in northern Lancashire. It's where I hide away when I want to spend some time dead for tax or other purposes, as it is a marvellous place to unwind, with or without a Pan Galactic Gargle Blaster. It's where I meet up with several other hoopy froods to reminisce about our earlier adventures across the galaxy and to plan our future travels. It's also the place I'd most miss if the Earth were demolished tomorrow.

That the 'van is number 42 amused me when we first got one on the site over twenty years ago, and I still smile to myself every time I see the little number in the window. A weekend there is most certainly my answer to the problems raised by life, the universe, and everything.

## Julie McMurray

*Novacon 23* was the beginning of 'life, the universe and everything' for me. I went to *Novacon 23* with a group of *Star Wars* fans who then went off to explore Birmingham. I was interested in the events listed in the programme and told my friends I was going to explore the convention instead. I met Robert Holdstock, Graham Joyce and Stephen Baxter at the bar plus the most amazing looking goths, and signed up for the next Eastercon which was *Sou'Wester: Eastercon '94*. I owe all my amazing life, my travels, my family and friends to *Novacon*. From *Novacon* I discovered larping, renaissance festivals, science fiction conventions, amazing books and music, met my husband, and was able to volunteer and work with lots of very talented people as well as getting involved with board gaming, and costuming. I was able to travel all over the world and make friends. Conventions drew me out of myself, gave me confidence in myself and helped me make friends and learn to trust people. Now here I stand on the precipice of *Novacon 42* thinking, yes, there's a lot of that 'life, the universe and everything' stuff going on in there.

For me the number 42 will always be associated with Perth fan Mikey O'Brien. I first met Mikey at a Swancon where his room was party central. I was delighted when he started dating and then married a really good friend of mine. A month before the wedding I saw him at Swancon and he complained of headaches. Soon after that he was diagnosed with brain cancer. Mikey fought a brave fight against the disease and survived for several years longer than expected. The last time I saw him was at his 42nd birthday, and he died before he reached 43. For Mikey, 42 really was the meaning of life.

## Ulf Skei

Nº 42 Empire Brown

Williamson, the clerk, grabbed the box of markers from the shelf and went back to Gene Roland's cubicle.

'Here you are, Sir, Empire Brown.'

Gene didn't even look at him, simply said 'Just leave them there, by the staples.'  
Williamson, 'Art' for short, put the box down, and went off for one of his walks in corridor 5 E. For some reason he enjoyed walking there.

'Hey, Art, what's cookin'?'

Leonard Bernstein, one of the younger accountants, and an avid jazzer, was in a particularly nice mood due to just having had a nice cup of coffee. Black.

'Nothing much, Leonard, just went to get some Nº 42 for Mr Roland.'

'Ah, I see, the old Nº 42.'

'Yes. Nº 42...'

And so it happened that a clerk went to the supplies room and fetched a box of 'Nº 42 Empire Brown' for Mr Roland, A.D. at *Hammer, Garfunkle & Roe*.

Art for short was run over by a bus on his way home that day, so this was to be his legacy.

Indeed.

I don't know what it was Arthur said, or whether in fact he ever said anything of the sort. It certainly didn't sound like him. But if he had said it, I can imagine how Trillian might have reacted to it and what Arthur would have said to that. She would have said "you're starting to sound a bit like your strange travelling companion."

To which Arthur would have replied "well, if you spent as much time with that fellow traveller, you might start to sound a bit Fordy too."

- Committee 51.9

## Richard Gray

Forty-two years ago, I took on the welcome task of compiling *Towel Corner* for ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha, after my predecessor had been sentenced to 42 years imprisonment for infuriating an editor. In the meantime, 42 other authors have succeeded in publishing books about the number 42, before it finally occurred to me at the age of 42 that I ought to be jumping on the bandwagon, if not actually driving the damned thing. Which leads me to request that anyone reading this item should let me know where the gap in the market lies for books about 42. What would you actually enjoy reading on the subject? Is a gift-book full of amusing snippets enough, or would you sooner buy a serious mathematical treatise complete with original science? Contributions should be at least 42 words long and the first 42 valid suggestions will each be rewarded with 42 boxes of handmade chocolates per month for the next 42 years. Be sure to provide a mailing address, preferably one with a 42 in it, entirely unlike this richy1965@hotmail.com

## My Kind of People

Novacon has a special place in my heart, as it was my introduction to fandom in general and ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha in particular.

As a slightly homesick 19 year old student in my first term at what was then the Coventry Polytechnic, I was fascinated by what these convention things were all about. *Novacon 16* in the De Vere Hotel in Coventry, the building next door to my halls of residence, was an opportunity too good to miss.

My overpowering memory of the weekend was of how many adults had dragged themselves out of bed on a Sunday morning, after having a good night at the disco the previous evening, to watch a screening of the Magic Roundabout feature film *Dougal and the Blue Cat*. It was standing room only. I came to the conclusion that these were my sort of people, and I have been attending conventions ever since.

I remember that there were also a number of ZZ9ers present, and I was persuaded by Simo, who was also attending Coventry Polytechnic, that joining this organization was a good thing. Too true, as they were also and have remained my sort of people.

It is hard to believe that all this happened over a quarter of a century ago. If I had a chance to do it all again, there is little doubt that I would change nothing.

Yun Men said, "I don't ask you about before the forty-second day; try to say something about after the forty-second day."

Yun Men himself answered for everyone, "Every day is a good day."



**Zen Cone**



Two, three and seven  
Are the prime factors of the  
Number forty-two

## Alex McLintock

Numbers. All the world is governed by dates and numbers. I've been a member of ZZ9 for seventeen years. I know where and when I joined – the Worldcon at the SECC, Glasgow, in 1995. That wasn't my first contact with ZZ9: Jim and Meike sold me a t-shirt at Picocon at Imperial College in 1990. It was a Disaster Area Sun Dive tour t-shirt. I still have it. I've been helping out ZZ9 for a number of years – in a small way. This coming year however I hope to do a lot more. Foolish me I'm standing for President because next birthday I will be Forty-Two.

By the time you are reading this then I will probably have been voted in, or not. It probably doesn't matter. Maybe I should probably have excused myself from standing merely because of the fact that I want to stand.

## Tea For Two

"Sorry, but could I ask, is it possible to get a decent cup of tea on this planet?"

"Gods no! You have more chance of getting a refund on a Sirius Cybernetics pile o'junk."

"Pity. I could really do with a nice cup of tea right now."

"Me too, mate. I dream of Darjeeling."

"I'm having rather odd fantasies regarding Earl Grey myself."

"Not Lady Grey? That would be less kinky."

"I think the tea thing may be just my age. The older I get, the more I want some decent tea."

"Same here. In my thirties I'd be willing to drink anything, but not now."

"It was the same with me, until a couple of years ago. We should really start a campaign for real tea. Real tea to satisfy the middle aged on every planet."

"Ah yes, we can have slogans. I'd have banner saying - I'm forty and I want my tea. What would yours say?"

"I'm for tea too."



## Ron Gemmell

### Misty Morning

It's another misty morning where we are staying, 42 Beechwood in the Vale of Eden; I should by rights be still in bed. It's fortunate (or maybe fate?) that I'm writing this at all, I don't usually bring a laptop on holiday.

I was intrigued by Jim's message (and a tad challenged) write a piece on the number 42? Even with such a generous deadline this could be difficult. But then it came to me, that back home in Birchwood, the house at 42 Whenshaw Road is certainly worthy of a mention on a morning like this.

It stands alone in ruins after a fire thirty years ago, overgrown lawn at the front and an equally 'jungle-like' orchard to the rear. Children help themselves to the apples, but never venture into the 'haunted house'.

Why it's still here is a mystery. It stands in an acre of prime building land, the owner often asked to sell, but always refuses.

Maybe Dan Brown could find a link, I can't. There is a mural to my right however, that boasts at least forty trees...

## Stalked by 42

The number 42 follows me relentlessly through life like a tracker dog. No matter where I roam, I always manage to find 42 somewhere - for instance, as part of a car registration or as a random patch of moss growing on a wall.

Take last week for instance. On a visit to the shops to buy in bits and bobs, for some unknown reason my bank card refused to work. So I searched my pockets in the hope that I had enough cash on me to pay the measly £8.10 it all came to. I was exactly 42p short. One item had to go, so I decided to ditch the washing powder.

A few days later, I decided to wash my winter coat. I went through the pockets to remove old hankies, bus tickets and other detritus that I didn't want fragmenting in the washing machine. Guess what I found... 42p in loose change. I just sighed, bunged the coat in the machine and then suddenly remembered that I didn't have any washing powder. Oh the irony.

## John Coxon

What do you get if you multiply six by nine? 42.

The above is the joke that closes out the first radio series of the Hitchhiker's Guide. However, some enterprising fans have since pointed out that if you take the result of the multiplication in base 13 you get 42, which makes the sum correct as long as you assume the universe is based on base 13. This is clearly ridiculous: 42 is six by seven, not six by nine. But, what happens if we work out six by seven in base 7? As it turns out, you get 60 (six sevens, no remainder).

By a staggering coincidence, this year marks the 60th anniversary of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, also known as TAFF (you can now see why the beginning of this was so contrived!). TAFF is the mother of the fan funds and is, I believe, the oldest crowdfunding project in the world. At *Novacon 42*, as you may have seen, we're opening the nominations for the TAFF race, and if you're interested you should totally come find me to discover more – alternatively, feel free to visit [taff.org.uk](http://taff.org.uk).

4x2

I build stuff me, it's what I do these days. Bit of drywall, plumbing, lecky, tile, but really my main trade is carpentry.

When I'm not injuring myself with stuff (like today, but I have 9 other fingers, it's ok), I occasionally do walls. Walls are built with 2x4s, which doesn't take a lot of imagination to turn around a bit and call it a 4x2, familiar numbers indeed.

So think on it, just about every house that's built contains the answer; I work with the answer a lot of working days, I hold the answer in my hands and use it to meet my needs, and the needs of the structure.

The answer is contained in the basics of your house (notice this is old school and doesn't work in French money), and therefore is part of the fabric of existence.

Cor, eh?

Doug Who?

## James Shields

Forty-Two

This year I celebrated my forty-second birthday. By an amazing coincidence, Novacon is also in its forty-second year. I did seriously consider making this article exactly forty two words long. However, the Google Drive app still doesn't have a bloody word count function. Forty two minutes is the approximate duration of the train journey I have to write this piece.

Apparently forty-two is when our usefulness to society falls below the resources we consume. When I was younger, this might have troubled me. However, I've come to feel "sod society, it's about time I got something out of it." So I think it's not that we become less useful, it's just that we get fed up of being taken advantage of. Soon I'll become a crotchety old man waving my cane and shouting "ungrateful young bastards!"



Forty-second birthday cake



Choose Life. Choose a Universe. Choose Everything. Choose a digital watch. Choose a date in October in 2010. Choose a 2A bus 'cos you don't have a route 42. Choose a TV, a box set, a DVD player and a digital watch. Choose your friends to celebrate with. Choose a dressing gown with non-matching slippers. Choose a pizza and re-arrange the salami. Choose sitting on the couch watching a mind-expanding comedy show with its excellent documentary. Choose a crap World Cup beer that you found after getting off the bus and just pretend that the leading four is not there. Choose a future. Choose 42...

But why would I want to do a thing like that?

'Cos it's the MEANING OF LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING

## **Tony Berry (*Novacon 42* chairman)**

Let's have some numbers. It's *Novacon 42*. If it wasn't for a certain something that number would have no significance at all. We would be looking forward to *Novacon 45*, and even the big Five Oh, like in Hawaii. It all started back in 1971 when a group of fans, frustrated at the lack of conventions to go and get drunk at, decided to have a go themselves. 144 people turned up. It was such a success that it became an annual event, just like Eastercon, but with important differences: it's smaller with a single-stream programme that doesn't try to appeal to all genres. It's more fannish. Instead of wandering around the country it stays in the Midlands, often at the same venue for several years, which gives it an identity and consistency I think people appreciate. My first *Novacon*, back at the Royal Angus in Birmingham, was number 9 in 1979. Chris Priest was Guest of Honour, and that was the first *Novacon* which published a short story written specially for the occasion by the GoH. It's now 33 years later. Bloody hell that's a while, and I've never missed one since. I've been on the committee of 7 of those cons, and chaired another 7 if you include this one, more than anybody else. Am I mad? Ask my therapist.





**PDF  
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